

Is it permissible to pay Zakāt al-Fitr in Money instead of Food? [Detailed Question & Response]

Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Nāsir al-'Alwān (حفظه الله) was asked: A dispute has occurred between some of the brothers regarding the ruling of paying the Zakāt in money instead of Food. And everyone had his own opinion from an Islamic point of view, so I'll summarise it for you quickly:

The first person says: It is prohibited to pay the Zakāt al-Fitra in Money because it goes against what the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) did.

The second person says: It is preferred to pay [Zakāt al-Fitr] in Food, and paying it with money is permissible, however it is in opposition to the Sunnâh.

The third person says: It's preferred to look at the situation of the poor person & the situation of his country and its environment, because money might be better for him.

So my question O respected Shaykh: Did any of the Salaf give a Fatwa to pay [Zakāt al-Fitr] with money instead of Food? And is it better for someone to pay [Zakāt al-Fitr] with money because the needy prefers that?

Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Nāsir al-'Alwān (حفظه الله) responded by saying: This issue is one of the differed upon matters, and the Imāms of the Salaf differ regarding paying Zakāt al-Fitr with Money.

And saying this opinion or that opinion is more correct is a matter of Ijtihād, so no one should call the other person misguided or an innovator.

And the principle regarding the differences of opinion in the likes of this issue, is that it should not break the friendship & love between the disputers, nor to have fury in their hearts, for all of them are good, and there's no blame upon someone who concludes with [an opinion] of what he hears.

And many of the Imāms would say in their speech regarding the differed upon matters "Our statements are correct, while it could contain mistakes, and the statements of others are mistaken, but it could contain the truth"

And the Majority of the Imāms have gone to say that it's not permissible to take out Money for Zakāt al-Fitr, Imām Ahmad (رحمه الله) said: "I fear that it won't suffice, it's in opposition to the Sunnâh of the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم)", and this is the Madhab of Mālik (رحمه الله) and al-Shāfi'ī (رحمه الله). And al-Imām Ibn Hazm (رحمه الله) said: "Money does not suffice in any case to begin with, because that is not what the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) has mandated"

And 'Attā' (رحمه الله), al-Hassan al-Basrī (رحمه الله), 'Omar ibn 'Abdûl 'Azīz (رحمه الله), al-Thawrī (رحمه الله), Abū Hanīfah (رحمه الله) and others have gone towards the permissibility of paying [Zakāt al-Fitr] with Money instead of Food, Abū Ishāq al-Sabī'ī [who is one of the Imāms of the Tābi'īn] said: "I have seen them pay the Sadaqah in Ramadān with Darāhim [Money] in its [equivalent] value for food" narrated by Imām ibn Abī Shaybah (رحمه الله) in al-Musannâf.

And the proof for that is:

1 - Is that there's no text proven from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) nor any of the Sahābah regarding the impermissibility of paying [Zakāt al-Fitr] with Money, and the reported

Ahādith within the text mentioning a specific types of Food doesn't mean what's apart from it is forbidden [to give in Zakāt]

2 - The proof for this is that the Sahābah, may Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) be pleased with them, permitted taking out wheat [Which is not specified by the text] instead of barley, dates and similar to that from the different kinds that are narrated in the Authentic Ahādīth.

Infact, many of the Sahābah, rather most of them, during the era of Mu'āwiyah (رضي الله عنه) went towards the permissibility of giving out half a Sā' [2.5-3.0 kg's] from the Sumrā' [Brown wheat] of al-Shām instead of a Sā' [2.5-3.0 kg's] of dates, so this is a proof that they saw half a Sā' is equal to the price of a Sā' of dates or barley and similar to that.

3 - Also with proof that the purpose behind Zakāt is enrichment of the poor, and money is more beneficial for some of them instead of Food, so in that case, you would check to see the situation of the poor in every country.

4 - Also with proof that many of the needy take the Food and sells it on the same day or the next day below its actual price, so who would benefit more, the one that was given Food, or the one who was given the Money equivalent to the value of this Sā' [2.5-3.0 kg's], and Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) knows best.